



Arlington Historic District Commissions Final & Approved Minutes

September 10, 2020 8:00 PM
Conducted by Remote Participation

Commissioners Present: M. Audin, D. Baldwin, C. Barry, M. Bush, B. Cohen, A. Frank Johnson, S. Makowka, B. Melofchik, C. Tee, J. Worden N. Aikenhead entered meeting at 8:21pm

Commissioners Not Present:

Guests: Chris Green, Kathleen Tibbetts, Charles Grinnell, Kristin Neff, Don Westwater, Lynelle Mastromarino, Haley Childs, Susan Ann Kehler, Robert Murray, Whitney Scharer, Gen Green, Jessica Nordgren, David Bean, Laura Jarbeau

1. AHDC Meeting Opens 8:00pm Called to Order at 8:07pm
2. Approval of draft minutes from August 26, 2020 – Tabled until 9/24/20 by S. Makowka, seconded by J. Worden. Unanimous approval by all commissioners.
3. Communications
 - a. J. Worden circulated Millbrook study recommending AHDC involvement – S. Makowka to send status inquiry to Planning Dept
4. New Business
 - a. Continuation of Formal Hearing for 187 Lowell Street (Grinnell) for new construction. C. Grinnell gave presentation and focused on changes since last meeting. Site plan not modified (pg. 13) since 8/27 porch entry modification. Regarding comments made about carriage doors “header”, he has made the following modifications for 9/10/20 presentation: simple front elevation without bay window on first floor, increased carriage doors “header”, and added soldier course. Applicant asked for preference for bay versus no bay on front. M. Bush offered minor preference for without, other Commissioners liked the bay but not strongly preferred either way. Applicant said he is still undecided and asked for a “subject to approval by monitor” for either alternative. Commissioners seemed agreeable to leave that up to monitor and applicant.

Discussion about visibility of garage doors because of varying perspectives. Applicant discussed other changes including size and location of fire vents - everyone agreed looked better. Discussion about gutter corner and how he will custom fabricate the corner so that the turn is appropriately integrated from rake to (fiberglass) gutters. There will be cellar sashes – probably not seen from the road – probably a 2 pane window (side

by side usually). Applicant asked if ok to use fiberglass in these locations – answered yes based on representation of location and lack of visibility from road. Discussion about entry porch and stairs railing and baluster details. M. Audin offered a simpler version might be appropriate. He stressed the importance of relating details of porch, front gable corbels, and gable brackets. Regarding porch detailing, S. Makowka stated his preference was for lattice under the stairs and same brick foundation as house under the platform. Commissioners agreed this is a more typical treatment.

B. Cohen stated her appreciation for Applicant's attention to detail. B. Cohen moved to accept proposal as described in the application, drawings, and as presented and discussed at AHDC hearings from 6/10/2020 through 9/10/2020 for the construction of a new home subject to the following conditions: the final set of drawings to be approved by monitor prior to construction including, but not limited to, final details of front bay [elimination okay], basement windows, and porch railing design. Seconded by C. Barry. B. Melofchik offered that she has some pictures of balusters from a historic home she admired that might appeal to applicant. She will pass along. Roll call vote on motion: M. Audin – y, C. Barry – y, D. Baldwin – y, C. Tee – y, M. Bush – y, A. Johnson – yes, B. Melofchik – y. Unanimous approval. Monitor appointed B. Cohen. M. Bush noted for the record said it is very rare for a new house to have unanimous approval.

- b. **Continuation of Formal Hearing for 87 Pleasant Street for solar tiles & conduit.** D. Westwater spoke for Applicant. He noted that copper crest on top of the roof is not compatible with the proposed solar tile materials. He noted they are putting a white ash decking on the porch and if they can't put the solar roof on they will go with a regular shingled roof with added solar panels. They think solar tiles look a lot better than panels. L. Mastromarino from Tesla said copper cannot be in place with the metals involved with the solar roofing due to oxidization. According to the Tesla representative, the existing copper crest on the roof would need to be stripped. C. Barry asked why they can't do an isolation membrane. The flashing can be rubber. The rubber membrane goes tight to the ridge and goes under and over whatever flashing is used below the tiles and put thick enough treated wood cap and you now have a physical separation. L. Mastromarino said that Tesla engineers have not approved such an approach. M. Bush said that he understands that, from the Tesla perspective, a simpler solution is to allow the copper to be removed. The warranty on the product is likely the issue. J. Worden indicated that the ridge cap detail needed to be retained and asked if it could be made out of some metal that looks like copper. M. Audin asked if their proposed removal is the only one solution they have for the ridge – answer was yes. D. Westwater said he likes the look of the proposed roof. He Commissioner reiterated that an important objection is the existing prominent copper cap – they need to find a way to keep the copper cap.

The Commission also cautioned that, per the AHDC Design Guidelines, more standard solar panels would likely not be approved on the front facade. The Commission is willing – and even eager -- to consider the use roof tiles but the roof ridge cap is an important consideration. C. Barry said he also wants to see actual examples of the tiles and the flashing materials used for this product. The installation drawings don't show enough details. The Commission wants to see an actual sample of the tiles and colors, etc. to understand how installation would work and how the ridge cap can be saved visually. M. Bush asked "if Tesla can come up with a material for a geometrically

identical but not copper ridge cap that is compatible with that material would Commissioners be willing to approve?" Discussion about asking Tesla for samples and ways to save that decorative element on the ridge. Continued to 9/24 meeting.

- c. **Continuation of Formal Hearing for 53 Westmoreland Ave. (Leahy) for porch changes – Continued to 9/24 Due to Incomplete Submission of Materials**
- d. **Formal Hearing for 221 Pleasant Street (Jones-Neff) for fence installation.** K. Neff asked what area HDC has jurisdiction over. Discussion that HDC would never run a full 6' high fence out to the edge of the property, it would always cut down to a smaller fence tapering at the edge. S. Makowka said he thought the town building code limited the height near property lines. Objective of guidelines is not to block view of historic homes from street view. The Applicants stated that the property next door is completely open and there have been animals that they don't want running into their property.

The Commission noted that the existing AHDC fence guidelines are most applicable to structures situated square to the street but the siting of this structure on an angle raised issues of how to interpret jurisdiction. M. Audin presented information including a graphical diagram that laid out the locations of the relevant structures and possible setbacks. A proposal was discussed with 6' high fence back from front façade of 231 Pleasant Street and a slope down from there to a 2'6 high fence to wherever code allowed the fence to Pleasant Street. B. Melofchik asked about going from 6' to 2'6" – this could be angled over the course of 1 panel.

H. Childs (231 Pleasant Street) said that her preference, as mentioned in the AHDC Design Guidelines, is a living fence next to and in front of the house which would be alive and natural. She objected to tall fence next to her house. C. Barry also raised objection that 6' tall fence along property line, especially in front of structure, is historically inappropriate and could set an unfortunate precedent. Based on discussion, Applicants agreed alter their application to specify a 6' high fence on the lot side line side only behind the rear façade of 231 Pleasant Street with a 2'6" open fence extending closer to the street.

B. Cohen moved approval of the submitted application as discussed and modified at the hearing on 9/10/2020, for installation of proposed fence along the left property line. The fence can be 6 feet tall behind the blue line on diagram discussed [labelled "YARD BOUNDARY - 1, approximately even with the rear of the house at 231 Pleasant Street] and shall step down by that point to a low, open fence that meets the AHDC criteria for a front yard fence. The low fence shall terminate at the point even with the front façade of 231 Pleasant Street. The final design and location of the fence shall be approved by monitor prior to installation. Seconded by Charles Barry. Suggestion made that final approval be made by monitor prior to installation. B. Cohen amended motion; C. Barry seconded. Vote on amended motion: N. Aikenhead – y, M. Audin – abstain, D. Baldwin – y, C. Barry – y, C. Tee – y, J. Worden – y, B. Cohen – y. Motion passes. Monitor assigned – D. Baldwin.

- e. **Formal Hearing for 24 Jason Street (Johnson) for planters.** A. Frank Johnson stepped down from the Commission role to present her application. S. Makowka clarified that the sitting Commissioners were the six at large ones plus himself as an alternate. Applicant described interest in gardening during pandemic but that animals ate all plants

and they thought about raised beds in order to try to grow food with children. Chose high raised beds because she thought alternative of low bed with chicken wire or netting was unsightly. Started with beds along the side of house and then added 2 to run along sidewalk. Beds are made of cedar and the location chosen based on available sunlight, not to create visual barrier to yard, and to avoid removal of mature trees that shade the ear of the property. J. Worden asked why these planters are appropriate in a District. M. Bush said he's concerned on mostly grounds of precedent. No other flowerbeds are along the street like this and he doesn't believe that other existing examples were put in after the Historic District was created. Other examples are low beds along the side line not the front according to J. Worden.

L. Jarbeau abutter at 55 Jason St loves them and she thinks they look great. Applicant said she will stain boxes if that is what the Commission wants. M. Bush said his concern is not in any way related to the material or the color, purely it is a question of size and mass. In his opinion, this is effectively a wall on the property line. R. Murray at 45 Jason said the beds are not used for vegetables and only have flowers so they are basically flower beds. He thinks they are terrible looking, don't go with house or Jason Street properties. Looks very commercial. He feels they are totally inappropriate. Whitney Scharer, next door at 20 Jason disagrees with R. Murray – she likes the beds.

C. Tee said people are confusing flower beds with flower planters and raised beds. Flower beds are generally in the ground. Raised beds are standard in size and height and they are common and don't break up the sight lines the way these raised beds do. The size changes the entire look of the property. She feels it is incumbent on her as a Commissioner to be very clear about what we are doing and it is in keeping what we require of everyone else. R. Murray said should remove them and plant flowers. D. Baldwin said he hadn't realized they were stepped. We said no to a step wall because it was inappropriate to have the stepping. That is also a problem with him. Other Commissioners disagreed and stated that they don't feel comparison that is fair.

A. Frank Johnson clarified that she did write before installing beds to inquire if raised beds were under our jurisdiction and was told no because they are typically considered temporary structures. This issue appears to have been that the Chair did not understand that the proposed bed was 3' tall and not a more typical 12" height. It was noted that these beds are not addressed in the existing guidelines. B. Cohen said issue is the size – if they were lower maybe debatable but it's not a CONA, it is a change and does not meet the criteria for a CONA. Discussion about what is a temporary structure. How easy is it to remove? Raised cedar beds will last 8-10 years.

M. Bush stated that he would like that the Commission and the attendees to avoid any further mention of anyone's honor. He feels that everyone acted honorably – nobody intentionally did anything wrong and let's just move forward. Patricia Worden wants applicant to know since there's no definition of a raised bed, she feels no one should be offended by a difference of opinion. However, these beds are so dominant and don't belong on Jason Street. There are other ways to get vegetables than changing the streetscape view with these raised boxes. People don't put victory gardens in their front yards.

B. Melofchik asked if we had a situation where there was a living fence along the sidewalk and there were planters behind the living fence would this entire discussion be

moot? – M. Audin answered no it would still be under our jurisdiction. M. Bush proposed continuing this hearing until 9/24 due to the late hour. M. Bush suggested we ask applicant to continue the hearing and asked Commissioners to come up with suggestions on how we can remedy the situation. After some discussion M. Bush made a motion that the Commission accept the application subject to the condition that the applicant lower the beds by 1 board on each planter, seconded by B. Cohen for discussion. N. Aikenhead felt the motion was premature and the issue needed further consideration. General agreement with that sentiment. Point of order about pending motion which was then withdrawn by M. Bush. Applicant agreed to continue hearing. Motion to adjourn by M. Bush, seconded by M. Audin. Unanimous approval – roll call to adjourn. M. Audin -y, D. Baldwin-y, C. Barry-y, M. Bush-y, B. Cohen-y, A. Frank Johnson-y, S. Makowka-y, B. Melofchik-y, C. Tee-y, J. Worden-y, N. Aikenhead-y.

5. Meeting Adjourned at 11:17pm